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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: AFGHANISTAN, G20, UN CLIMATE CHANGE,
MIDEAST, USG PERCEPTION; BERLIN

- ¶1. Lead Stories Summary
- ¶2. Afghanistan
- ¶3. UN Climate Change Summit
- ¶4. Mideast Trilateral Summit
- ¶5. Obama Presidency
- ¶6. G20 Summit

¶1. Lead Stories

Primetime newscasts and several newspapers opened with President Obama's speech to the UN climate change summit. Sueddeutsche Zeitung and Berliner Zeitung both headlined: QObama disappoints climate activists.Q Die Welt headlined: QBarack Obama warns world community against climate catastrophe.Q Other newspapers led with stories on Afghanistan and the German elections. Editorials focused on the German elections and climate change.

¶2. Afghanistan

Front-page headlines: QWhite House and military leadership disagree over strategy on AfghanistanQ (Frankfurter Allgemeine), QNo new U.S. troops for AfghanistanQ Obama wants to develop a strategy first (Tagesspiegel), QAfghan President Karzai supports the demand to deploy more U.S. troopsQ (Die Welt).

Die Welt commented: QAt least half a dozen of times, McCrystal mentions in the report that the NATO mission in Afghanistan could fail. For a commander, this is close to defeatism. He must be dead serious about his demands. Given the disaster of the allegations of election fraud, many Americans are turning away from Afghanistan. Eight years at war without any attacks at home have made the goals hazy.

Tagesspiegel remarked: QThe rift is going right through the administration. At the end of a reworked strategy, there will not be a completely new approach. Obama will probably focus on three things: winning the support of the Afghan people will be more important than killing as many Taliban as possible. Afghans will be

given more responsibility and the training of the Afghan police forces and the army will be pushed forward. This means for the time being that more must be done before the engagement can be reduced.

Under the headline QThe Afghan Dilemma,Q Berliner Zeitung opined: QThe most senior U.S. commander in Afghanistan admitted that the last seven years in the country were lost yearsQfor the people in Afghanistan, ISAF, and the goal to stabilize the country and turn it into a place where terrorists can no longer find a safe haven. The Afghan project is threatened with failure. The U.S. is facing a second debacle on the scale of Vietnam. Withdrawal would be the logical result. McCrystalQs strategy offers a small exit by focusing on the training of Afghan police forces and soldiers. Theoretically, the governments of Washington and Berlin have understood this necessity. The practical implementation is however ridiculous and worthless.

13. UN Climate Change Summit

Although media welcomed President ObamaQs speech as a Qdramatic callQ (Die Welt), several newspapers highlighted that he did not make new commitments, noting that QObama disappoints climate activistsQ (Sueddeutsche, Berliner Zeitung). Spiegel Online headlined: QObamaQs climate speech frustrates climate activists. Several media focused on JapanQs determined promise: QAsians Outshine ObamaQ (FT Deutschland front-page headline).

ARD-TVQs Tagesthemen commented: QThere was no lack of powerful words of wisdom. Also Obama drastically chastised the consequences of global warming and called for a common fight against the climate

BERLIN 00001180 002 OF 003

catastrophe. However, what will America deliver? Obama did not give an answer. America and China matter.... Those who cause so much damage must bear their responsibility to resolve the problem. They must take the lead and not trail behind. We can trust Obama that the topic is a priority for him, but not for the rest of America. AmericaQs political energy is focusing almost exclusively on the health care reform. There is no time to rescue tomorrowQs world. As a result, his people make the world hope Obama a lame duck.

Under the headline QForget Copenhagen,Q FT Deutschland editorialized on its front page: QThe UN summit on climate change produced no specific result. However, it has nothing to do reduction goals and greenhouse gases, but the political realization that we should forget Copenhagen. The long-expected speech by President Obama and his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao to the UN showed that the Copenhagen climate conference cannot be rescued even with the greatest negotiating skills. Neither the U.S. nor China will make sufficient moves by then to make an agreement possible that defines carbon dioxide reduction goals by 2050 or even 2020. However, the success of the talks between the 192 countries depends primarily on the U.S. and China. It is unfortunate that Obama wants to get the climate change bill through the Congress only next year, if at all. This reduces the opportunities of the developed countries to negotiate and force developing countries to make concessions. In addition, he gives China a reason not to make another move. The chances that we will get more than a non-binding framework agreement faded further yesterday. They are now about zero. It would therefore be best to postpone the conference until the U.S. is ready for making real progress in the negotiations. Otherwise, a compromise in Copenhagen could make real progress impossible for years because the climate sinners can hide behind it.

Die Welt commented on its front page: QPresident Obama also used that killer argument of the end of the world in his speech to the UNQhe made a commitment to reach a post-Kyoto agreement although he knows that his parliamentarians will not approve of it.

14. Mideast Trilateral Summit

Media noted that Qon the margins of the UN summit, the U.S. tried to restart the deadlocked Mideast peace processQ (ZDF-TVQs Heute). Sueddeutsche carried a front-page photo of Obama and the Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian President Abbas,

highlighting that he told them: QIt is past time to talk about starting negotiations. It is time to move forward.Q Berliner Zeitung headlined: QThe summit of modest expectations.

Spiegel Online headlined QU.S. gets lost in the Mideast mazeQ and wrote in its intro: QBarack Obama is at risk of getting sidetracked in the Mideast conflict. His meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian President Abbas was not more than a photo opportunity. No U.S. President before him has dared to hold such a summit without a common statement.

Sueddeutsche comments: QThe American sunny boy is being caught up by realties in the Middle East. In the trilateral meeting with Netanyahu and Abbas, Obama was standing there with empty hands. For months, his envoy was engaged in a shuttle diplomacy. The result is sobering: A UN photo opportunity.

15. Obama Presidency

Frankfurter Allgemeine commented: QDuring his visit to Europe in April, ObamaQs message of change and hope still captivated many people. Half year later, most Americans and many people throughout the world have all returned to earth. Concerning the Afghanistan war, ObamaQs leadership in recent weeks was everything else but

BERLIN 00001180 003 OF 003

impressive. Nobody in Washington is apparently concerned that, in addition to the Canadians, important European allies might withdraw their troops from Afghanistan in 2011. It is time for Obama to deliver a great speech on the necessity to succeed in Afghanistan. Whether his calculation to reset relations with Moscow will work by renouncing the deployment of a missile defense shield in Central Europe will be seen only in a few months. In the Mideast policy, Obama and his envoy Mitchell only got a photo opportunity in New York. There is no sign of democratization or economic liberalization in Cuba, although some American sanctions were lifted. Also in Pyongyang, ObamaQs message of change and readiness to talk without preconditions has not had any impact yet [With his trade policy on China and Mexico], Obama is continuing the bad examples of his predecessors Reagan, Clinton and Bush, although neither of them were protectionists. This is not the change we can believe in. How does Obama want to credibly restart negotiations on free trade at the G20 summit? As the host of the world in New York and Pittsburgh, Obama will certainly find nice words. He has already found them for the topic of climate change on Tuesday. However, they are at best a promise.

16. G20

FT Deutschland commented that Optimists see the G20 as a global leadership forum. However, there is much evidence indicating that the group has surpassed the hill and that the summit in Pittsburgh will bring us down to earth again.Q The paper added: QEurope is probably the greatest obstacle to turning the G20 into a permanent leadership forum. In the long run, regular meetings of the 20 most powerful countries make no sense if they are not talking about currency issues. For the euro zone, euro chairman Jean-Claude Juncker would be the right representative, not Merkel, Sarkozy and Berlusconi. As a representative for the increasingly less important pound, Brown would have to give up his seat. Both things are not conceivable in the foreseeable future.

MURPHY